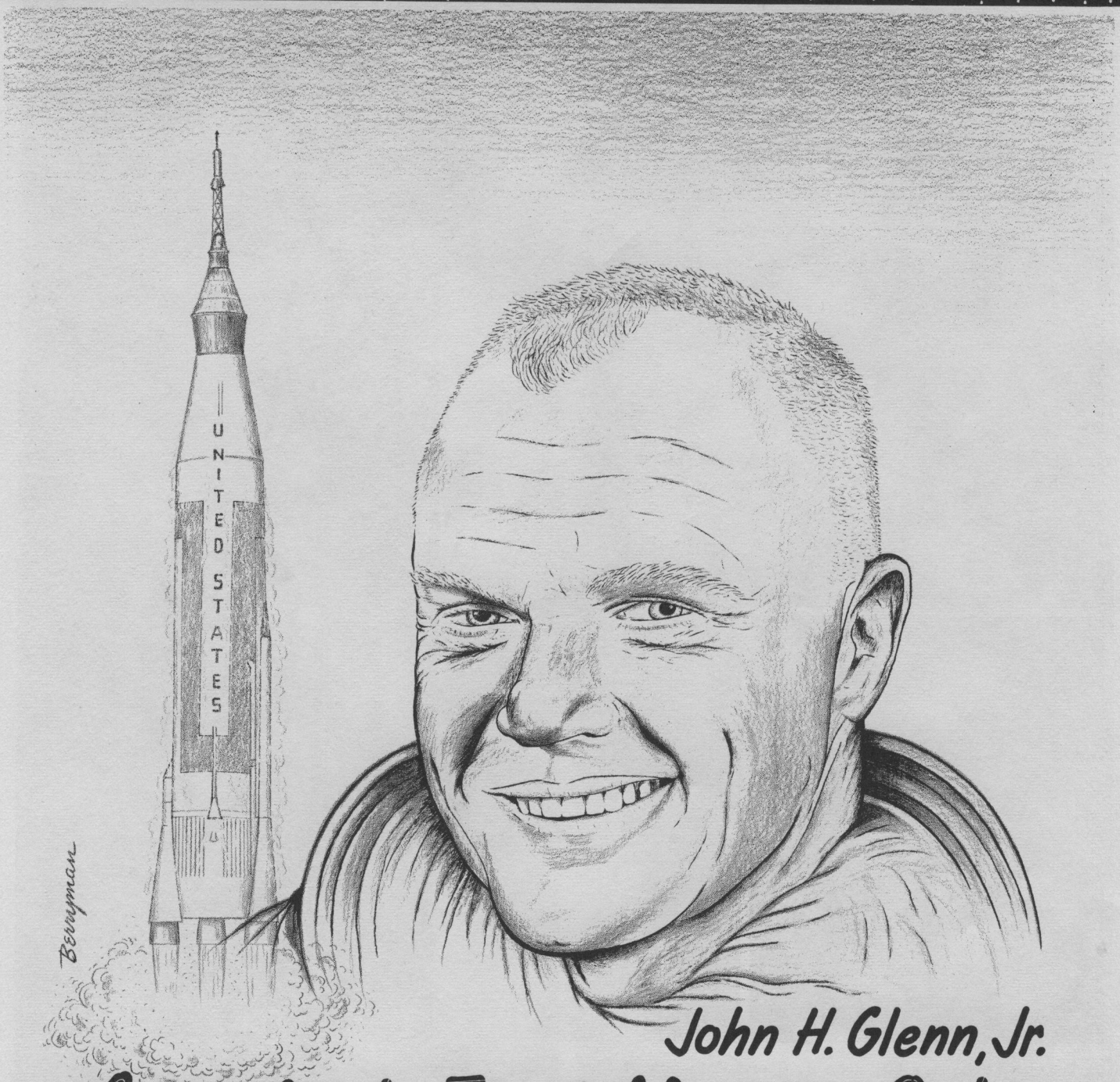
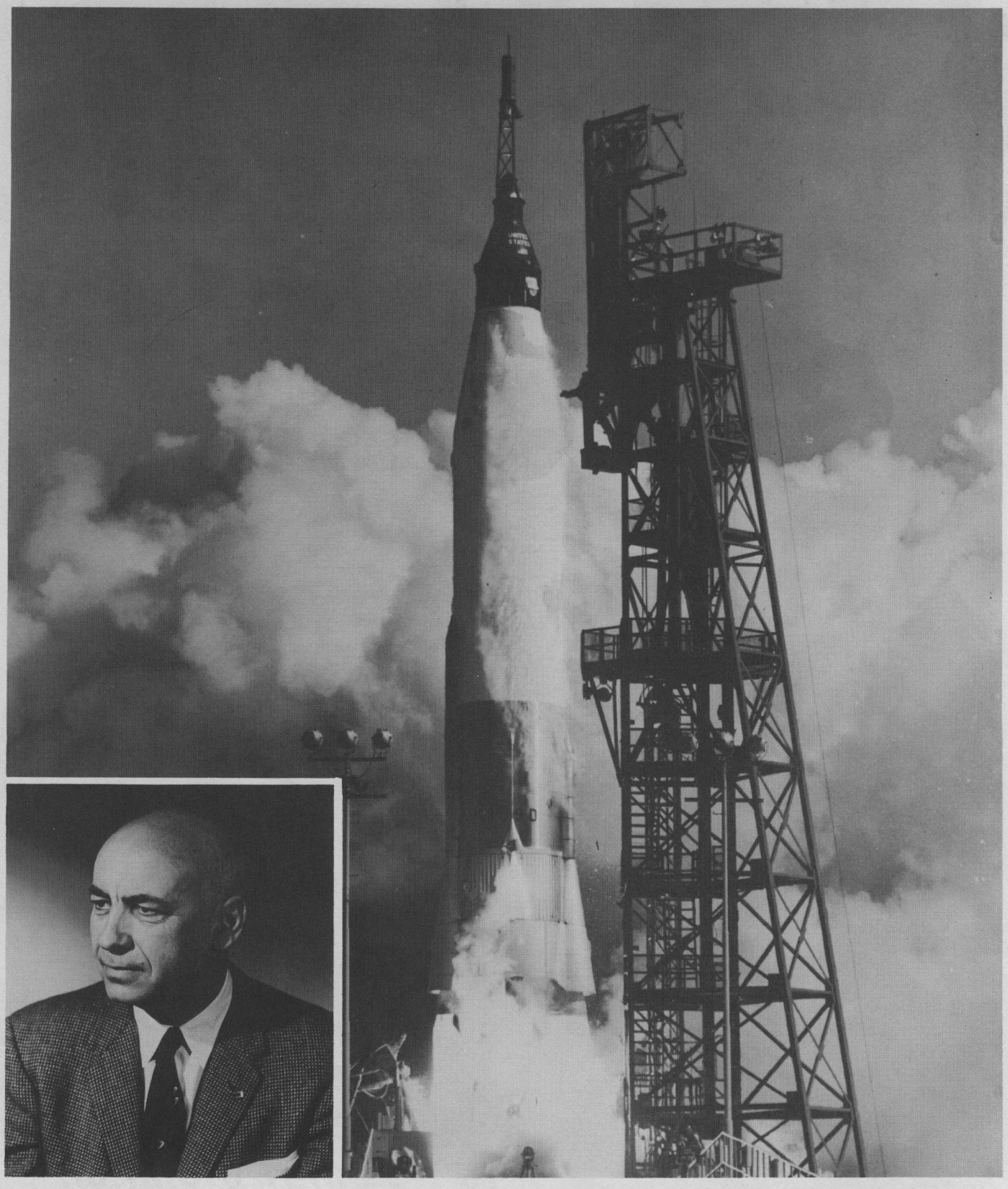
PROJECT MERCURY



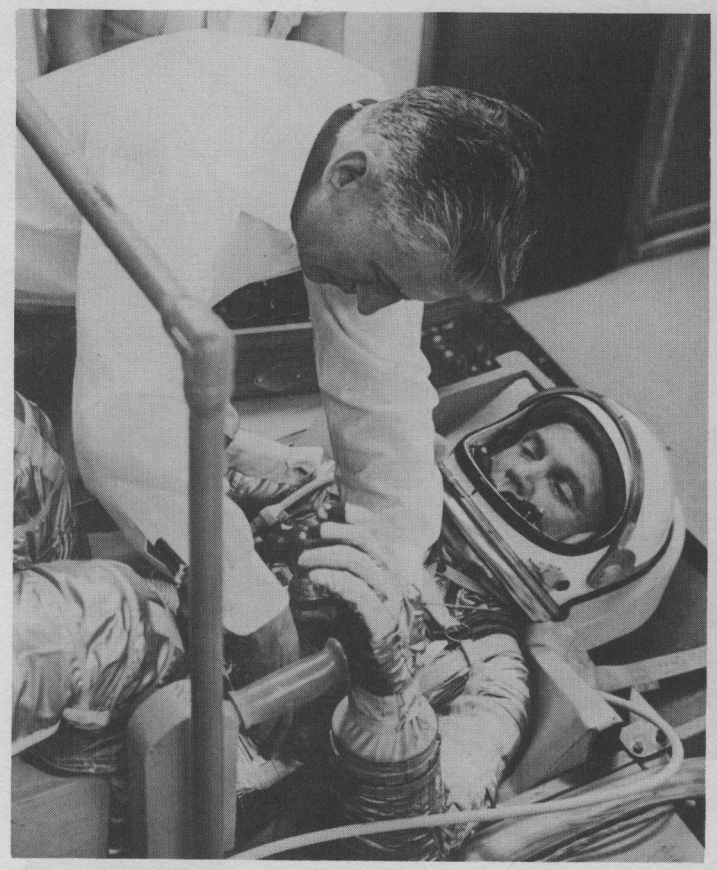
John H. Glenn, Jr.

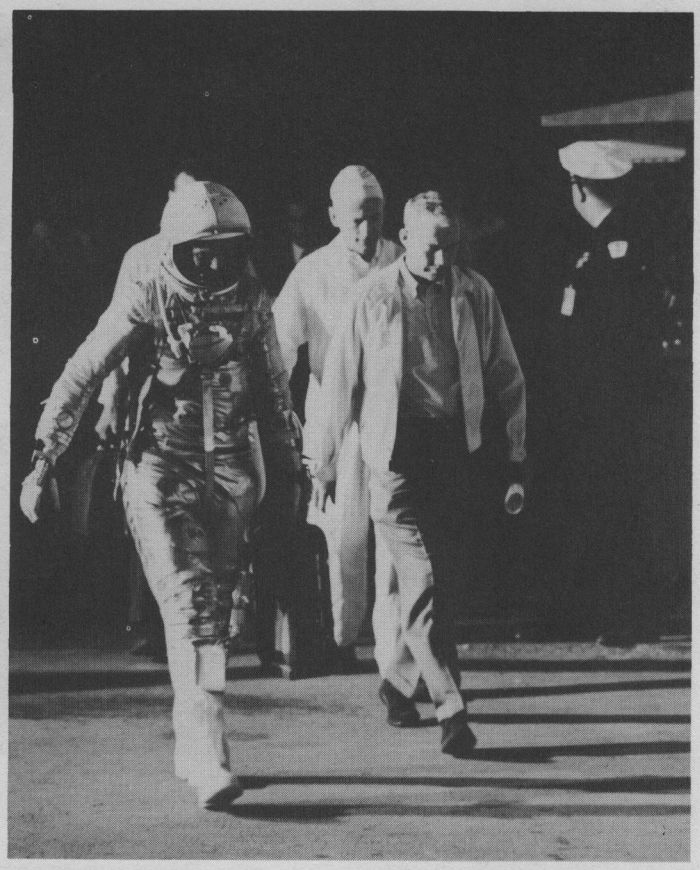
America's First Man to Orbit

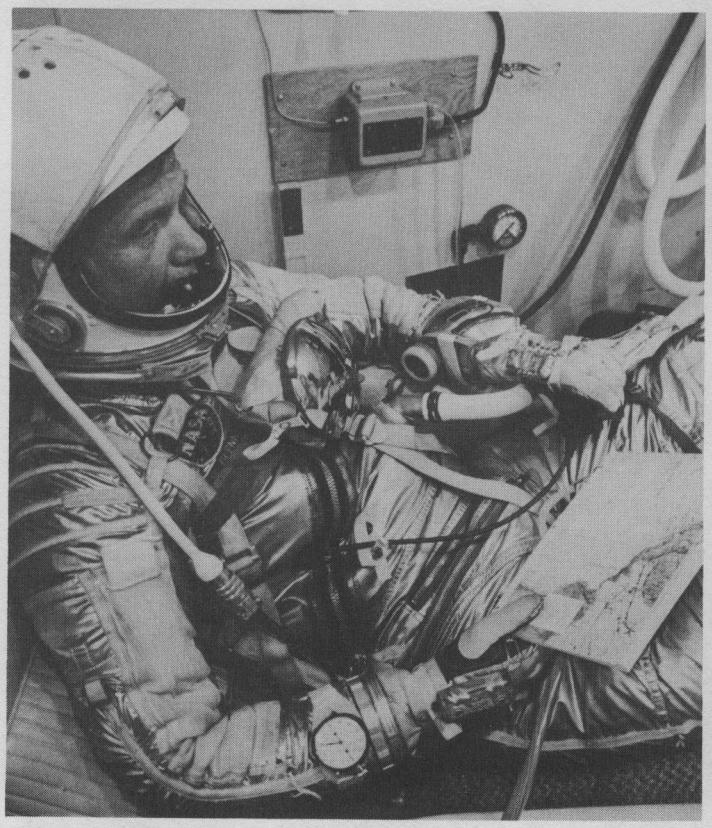
February 20, 1962

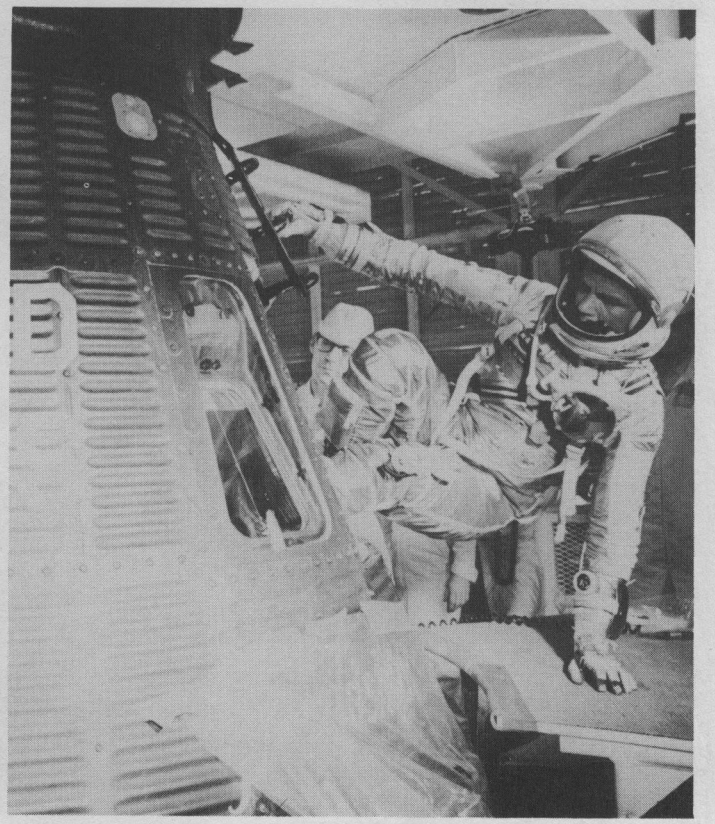


On Tuesday, February 20, John H. Glenn Jr., one of the seven Project Mercury astronauts assigned to Manned Spacecraft Center, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, became the first American to make orbital flight around the earth. Glenn's Friendship 7 spacecraft (above) leaves the launching pad at Cape Canaveral Florida, at 9:47 a.m. (EST). Glenn circled the globe three times at a speed of approximately 17,500 miles per hour and at altitudes ranging from about 100 miles to about 160 miles. He completed his three-orbit flight in 4 hours and 56 minutes and landed at 2:43 p.m. In ceremonies held Friday, February 23 at Cape Canaveral, President John F. Kennedy presented the NASA Distinguished Service Medal, the NASA's highest award, to Glenn and Robert R. Gilruth (inset), Director of the Manned Spacecraft Center.



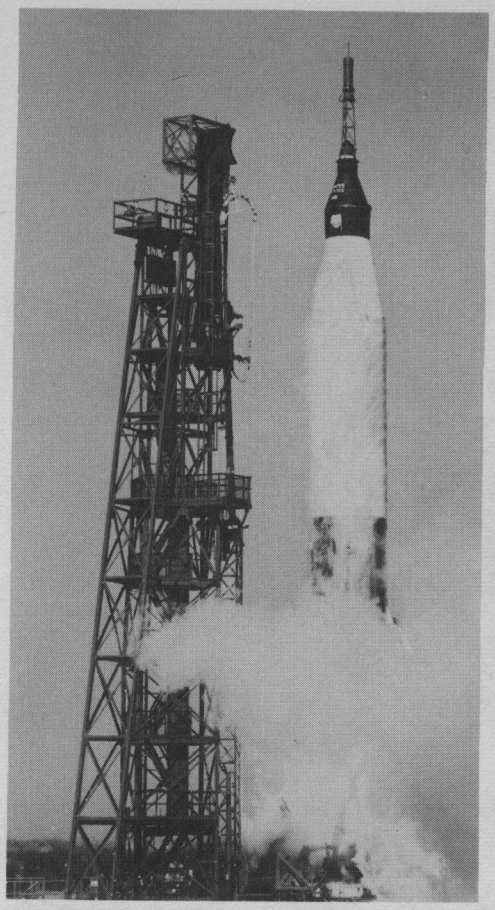


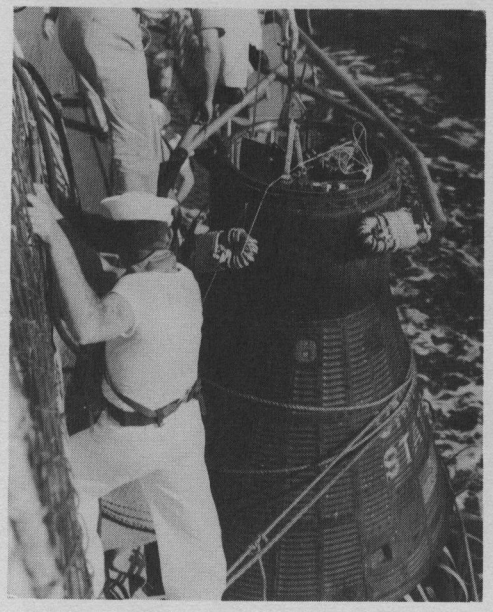


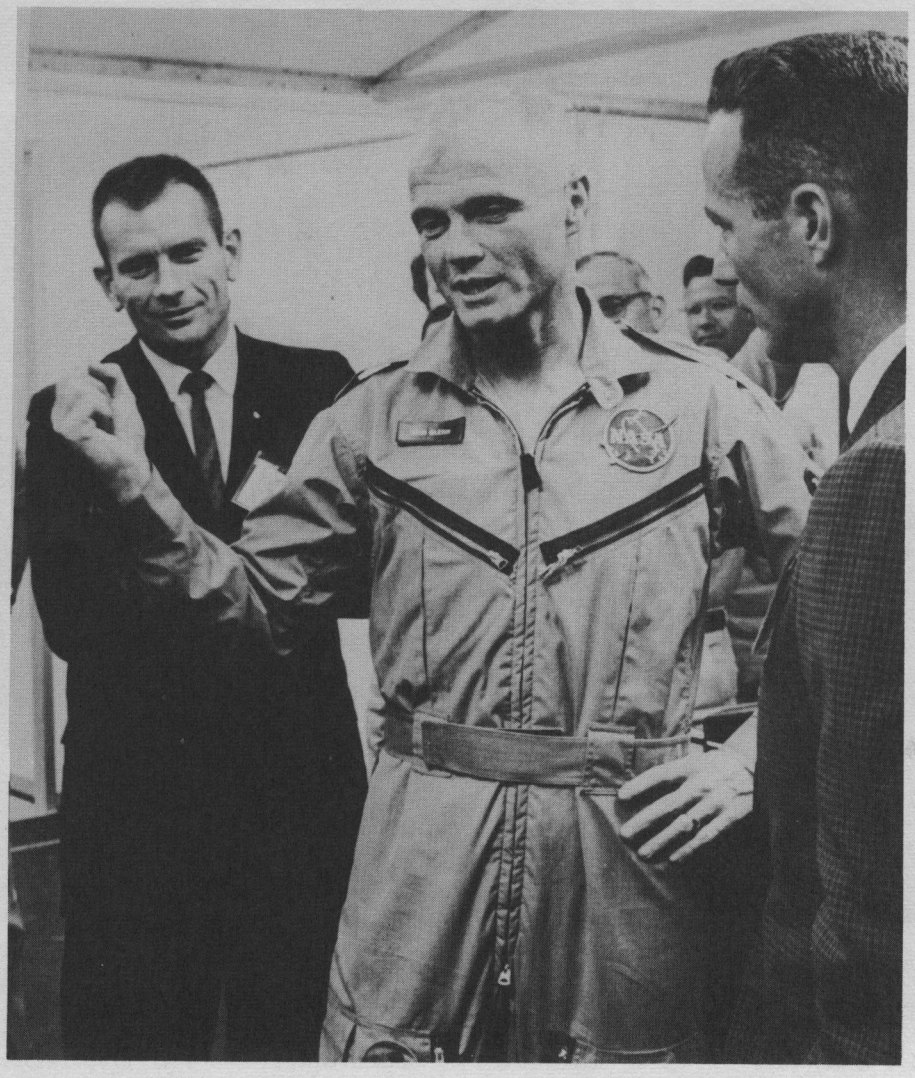


Upper left photograph - Joe W. Schmitt, Space Flight Equipment Specialist, makes adjustment to Astronaut Glenn's spacesuit prior to MA-6 launch operations. Lower left - Glenn relaxes in his space suit and studies a map prior to being transported to launch pad.

Upper right - Glenn leaves Hangar S enroute to his spacecraft. With him are Dr. William K. Douglas, personal physician for the Astronauts, and Schmitt (in background). Lower right - Glenn enters the Friendship 7 in preparation for his historic flight.







Upper left - Mercury-Atlas 6 carries Friendship 7 spacecraft with Astronaut Glenn on first U.S. manned orbital flight. Lower left - Glenn's spacecraft is brought alongside the USS Noa, recovery ship, after flight. Upper right - The USS Noa recovers the Friendship 7 spacecraft. Lower right - Astronaut Glenn talks to fellow Astronauts Donald K. Slayton and M. Scott Carpenter (right), Glenn's backup pilot for the flight.